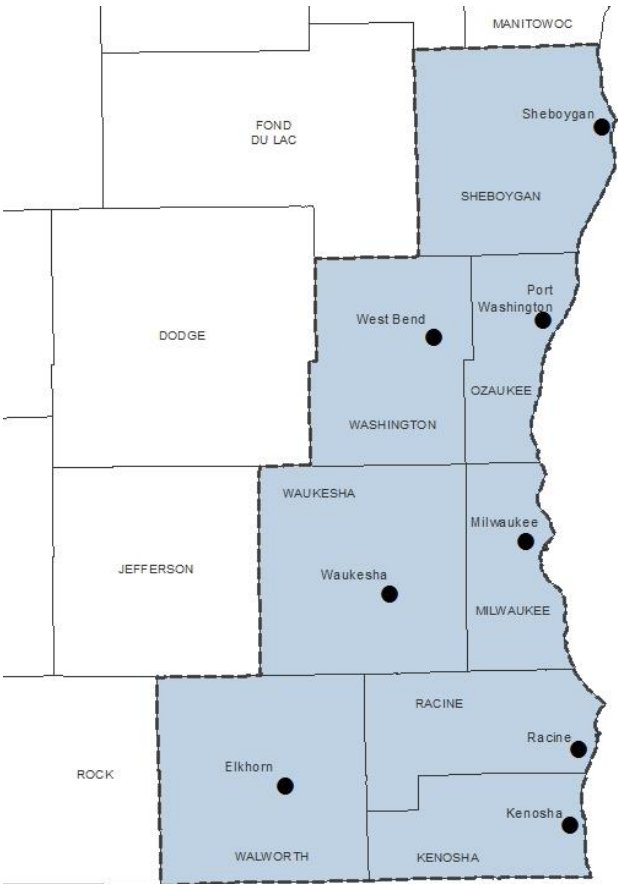


Recreation Opportunities Analysis



LOWER LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL REGION



7. LOWER LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL REGION

Background

LANDSCAPE SETTING

The Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region is in the southeast part of the state and encompasses Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha Counties. Home to Milwaukee, the largest city in the state, the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region is the most urban and most populous of all Wisconsin regions. The urban influence of Milwaukee and its surrounding suburbs has created demand for distinctly urban recreation facilities such as dog parks, city trails, and basketball courts. Despite this urban influence, some areas of the region such as Walworth County, the lakes area of western Waukesha County, and the Kettle Moraine State Forest offer opportunities for undeveloped outdoor recreation. Tourism, especially from the greater Chicago metropolitan area, is a major influence on Lower Lake Michigan Coastal recreation as increasing numbers of Illinois residents travel to the region to use Wisconsin lands and waters.

This region is also home to some of the world's best examples of continental glacial activity. Drumlins, eskers, kettle lakes, kames, ground and end moraines, and other glacial features are evident throughout the entire area. A particularly striking area is the long "ridge" (known as a kettle interlobate moraine) that formed between the Green Bay and Lake Michigan lobes during the Wisconsin Glaciation. The area is protected in part by the Kettle Moraine State Forest. Historically, many of the state's richest and most diverse streams and rivers were found in the southeastern part of Wisconsin. While most of these have been degraded, improving management practices have improved many of these waterways. However, the Mukwonago River has maintained its quality and harbors one of the highest concentrations of fish, mussels and other aquatic invertebrates in the Midwest.

To the east, the region is characterized by a lake plain along Lake Michigan that formerly harbored a mix of low woodlands, savanna and prairies. A series of low ridges, formed by advances in the Lake Michigan lobe of the last glacier, cause the few mid-sized rivers in the area to follow a course generally parallel to Lake Michigan. Today this area provides the setting for the Milwaukee-Chicago metropolitan corridor and is heavily urbanized. Some blocks of open space and natural settings occur, but are mostly fragmented, small, and often degraded by numerous invasive exotic species. The larger blocks of open space are primarily restricted to wet areas, two examples being the Germantown Swamp and the wetlands along the Des Plaines River. The Lake Michigan shoreline, although heavily developed, remains an important bird migration route and wintering area. The Milwaukee, Menomonee, Root, Pike and Des Plaines rivers harbor quality habitats along several stretches and their tributaries.

LOCAL ECONOMY

The major land cover in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region is agricultural, followed by grassland. Most of the tillable land is intensively farmed, with dairying and cash-cropping of grains and vegetables being the predominant types of agriculture. Parts of the region are continuing to urbanize, with expanding household and commercial development in the Milwaukee area suburbs.

Some of the top employment sectors of the regional economy include education and health services, trade transportation and utilities, professional and business services, manufacturing, government, leisure and hospitality, and financial activities.

RECREATION USES AND PARTICIPATION

Lake Michigan is a major recreational resource for this region. It provides opportunities for fishing, swimming, wind-surfing, sailing and all types of boating. There are a number of parks in the area located along Lake Michigan. Richard Bong State Recreation Area offers the widest variety of recreation activities of any state property, including canoe/kayaking, swimming, fishing, picnicking, camping, horseback riding, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, motorcycling and hunting. Being a former military airbase, it is also an excellent example of how high-

quality recreation areas can be more a function of location, size, and soils that can accommodate a variety of activities, than “wild” settings.

Several rivers that empty into the lake, such as the Milwaukee, Root and Pike, also provide surprisingly good fishing that includes spring and fall runs of salmon and steelhead from Lake Michigan. Some urban recreational trails for walking, bicycling, and roller blading exist, such as the Root River in Racine and Oak Creek Parkways and the Hank Aaron State Trail in Milwaukee. As would be expected in an urbanized area, there is very little land available for open space recreation, such as camping and hunting. However, there are still many small patches of natural landscape left that could support activities such as bird watching and nature observation.

Recreation participation rates for Wisconsin residents as a whole were presented on page 14 of the Introduction. The majority of participation rates of Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region residents are consistent with the state average or within five percentage points in variation. Some of the more notable variations are in the box to the right.

Activities that residents of the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region participate in at lower rates than the state average:

- Fishing – ice fishing
- RV/Pop up camping
- Snowmobiling

EXISTING RECREATION SUPPLY IN THE LOWER LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL REGION

PUBLIC LANDS FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

The Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region has approximately 95,000 acres of public land available for outdoor recreation. Properties in close proximity to Lake Michigan are especially popular, as well as other small pockets of land dispersed between the region’s large urban centers. This section briefly describes the public conservation and recreation lands in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. A description of all public lands in Wisconsin is provided in Appendix 3.

a) Federal

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service manages approximately 1,400 acres in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal area, located in both Ozaukee, Sheboygan and Walworth counties. These parcels are reserved mainly for waterfowl production and grassland protection.

b) State

The Department of Natural Resources owns over 90,000 acres in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. State properties in the region span the range of intended recreational settings and development levels (Map B3). At one end of the spectrum are properties such as Kohler-Andrae and Harrington Beach State Parks that include developed campgrounds, miles of trails, boating opportunities and picnic sites. The Kettle Moraine State Forest State is a prominent property in this region, providing numerous trail and developed recreation opportunities. In contrast, properties like Cedarburg Bog State Natural Area, the most intact large bog in southeastern Wisconsin, housing a relict community of flora and fauna. Although these types of properties can provide some limited recreation opportunities for low-impact activities such as hunting, bird watching and nature study, their primary purpose is not necessarily to provide recreation opportunities requiring development or infrastructure.

c) County

The Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region does not have any county forests, but county parks provide campgrounds, boat launches, walking trails and other types of recreational opportunities. For example, an impressive 172 parks in Milwaukee County totaling over 15,000 acres, provide opportunities for cross-country skiing, mountain biking and birding. Sheboygan county has also been active in recent years, developing over 39 miles of paved off-road, multi-use trails.

d) Other

Many cities, villages, and townships in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region own and manage parks, boat access sites, and other properties that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. Given their easy proximity to many citizens and scenic views, these properties are very well-used. In addition, several school properties the region are open to some forms of recreation, generally when they are not in use by school and community groups.

PRIVATE LANDS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

This section summarizes the privately-owned lands in the region that are open to the public for some types of recreation. A detailed description of private lands in Wisconsin open to the public is provided in Appendix 3.

a) Managed Forest Law (MFL) and Forest Crop Law enrolled lands

Approximately 1,300 acres in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region of land are currently enrolled in these forestry programs, divided between Ozaukee, Sheboygan, Walworth, and Washington counties. Because these programs use 25 or 50-year contracts, the total amount enrolled changes from year to year as landowners enroll lands into the program (only the MFL program is open to enrollment) and contracts covering other lands expire. MFL-closed land is not open for public use.

b) Land trusts

The following land trusts operate in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region: Seno Kenosha/Racine Land Trust Conservancy, The Prairie Enthusiasts, Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy, River Revitalization Foundation, Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, Caledonia Conservancy, Glacial Lakes Conservancy, Ice Age Trail Alliance, Geneva Lake Conservancy, Kettle Moraine Land Trust, Land Trust Network, Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation, Faye Gehl Conservation Foundation, Muskego Lakes Conservancy, Tall Pines Conservancy, and Waukesha County Land Conservancy. These non-profit conservation organizations have protected approximately 2,000 acres in the region. Most of these lands are open to the public for some forms of recreation such as hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife watching, snowshoeing and other similar activities.

c) Voluntary Public Access Program

The DNR Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program provides financial incentives to private landowners who open their property to public hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife observation. Funding was authorized in the 2008 and 2014 Farm Bills. Funds from 2014 are administered and provided by U.S. Department of Agriculture-NRCS. To date, there are over 3,600 acres available in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. These properties are scattered throughout all counties except for Ozaukee and Milwaukee counties.

d) Snowmobile Trails on Private Lands

The state snowmobile trail network has been developed through the work of local clubs partnering with private landowners. Agreements with willing landowners allow trails to be located for the winter season, which enables snowmobilers to travel throughout the network. There are 1091 miles of snowmobile trail in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal region, of which 91% (996 miles) on are private lands.

EXISTING PUBLIC RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The department contacted representatives from county governments and regional organizations to gather information about the recreation opportunities available to the public across the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. In addition, department staff searched websites for additional data and descriptions of the recreation opportunities provided. Maps C and D show existing recreation infrastructure in the eight counties of the region.

The Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region contains fewer public land holdings than other, less urbanized regions. Specifically, the region is home to the Kettle Moraine State Forest, four state parks, several state fish and wildlife management properties, and trails. These properties provide a wide range of high-quality recreation opportunities. What follows are a few examples of infrastructure in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region that support a variety of recreation activities.

a) *Hank Aaron State Trail*

- Connects Miller Park and the Lake Michigan lakefront
- Walking, bicycling and in-line skating opportunities

b) *Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit*

- 41 miles of equestrian and 60 miles of snowmobile trails
- Over 20 miles of mountain bike and 31 miles of hiking trails
- Over 20 miles of cross-country ski trails
- 4 campgrounds, 5 backpack shelters
- 3 swimming beaches
- Boat landings and walk-in access sites for canoes and kayaks
- Picnic and shelter areas

c) *Kettle Moraine State Forest – Southern Unit*

- Miles of hiking trails
- 87 miles of equestrian trails and horse camping
- 30 miles of renowned off-road biking trails
- Cross-country ski trails
- Boating, fishing and swimming opportunities
- Hunting opportunities and firearm target range
- Part of an 87-mile network of snowmobile trails

d) *Kettle Moraine State Forest – Lapham Peak Unit*

- Hausmann Nature Center
- Hiking and biking trails
- Observation tower and picnic areas
- Horseback riding opportunities
- Snowmaking for cross country skiing opportunities

e) *Richard Bong State Recreation Area*

- 200+ campsites
- 16 miles of hiking trails
- Picnic and shelter areas
- Horseback, ATV, UTV, and off-highway motorcycle trails
- 200-foot swimming beach and bath house, canoeing and kayaking
- Hunting, trapping, and fishing opportunities
- Special use zone for flying model airplanes, rockets, training falcons, etc.
- Cross-country skiing, sledding, and ice fishing in the winter

f) *Kohler-Andrae State Park*

- 100+ campsites
- Hiking opportunities – including nature trails, dune cordwalks, or along the Lake Michigan shoreline
- Picnic and shelter areas
- Hunting, trapping and fishing opportunities
- Bicycling areas
- Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter

g) *Lakeshore State Park*

- Hiking and walking trails with views of the Milwaukee skyline
- Paved trails for bicycling and skating
- 20-slip marina for mooring large boats
- Fishing opportunities
- Winter hiking, ice fishing and snowshoeing in the winter

h) *State Wildlife, Fishery, and Natural Areas*

- Hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities
- Hiking, nature study, photography, wildlife watching opportunities

PUBLIC INPUT ON RECREATION NEEDS IN THE LOWER LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL REGION

INPUT GATHERED AS PART OF THE ROA.

The department hosted four public open house meetings, in Baraboo, Horicon, Milwaukee, and Fitchburg between December 5th and 13th, 2017. These open houses were designed to both present information about the ROA and to gather public input on the types of recreation activities they pursued, what places they liked to visit (including what attributes drew them to these properties), and what additional opportunities they wished were available in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region.

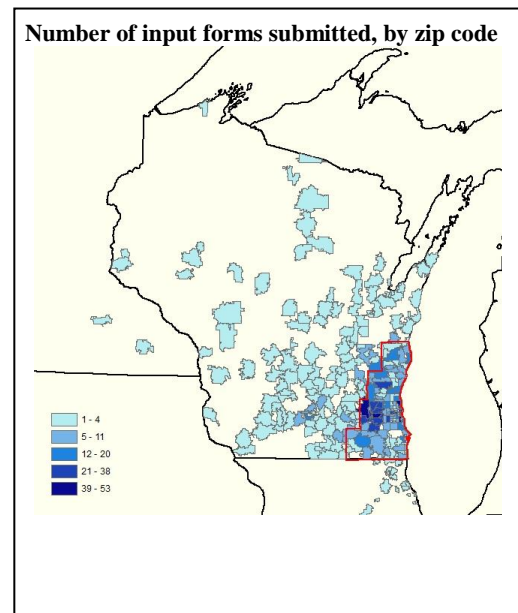
In addition to these open houses, the department posted an online public input form to its web page. A downloadable version was also available for people who preferred to print, fill out, and send in the form. The public input period ran from November 15, 2017 to January 2, 2018. The department sent out information and press releases about the ROA project and encouraged people to share their perspectives through the online or hardcopy public input forms. Recreation groups, non-profit organizations, and others distributed links to the input form to their members.¹

The department received comments in the following formats:

- 1,611 online public input forms
- 178 paper copies of the public input form
- 3 letters and emails

It is important for readers to keep in mind that the public input received through the ROA process is simply information gathered at one point in time, using an open-access technique. It is not a representation of what the “average” resident believes or the range of perspectives that exist.

Respondents were asked to list the zip code of their primary residence. Of those who provided this information, the map on the right shows their distribution and frequency. As can be seen, the primary residence of many people who provided input is within the eight-county Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. Over half of the respondents identified their primary residence as Waukesha County (54%) while almost a third were from Milwaukee County (29%). It is possible that proximity to the Kettle Moraine State Forest may have drawn many of these individuals to become interested in this input opportunity. In general, the overwhelming majority of respondents were from southeastern Wisconsin.



¹ The public input form was available for anyone to complete and over 1,700 people did so. The department’s experience is that when it provides “open access” opportunities in which anyone can participate, the people that respond tend to be those that find out about the input opportunity and to have a particular or active interest in a specific issue; that is, they care enough about an issue to take the time to find and fill out the form or write an email or letter. The responses received are valuable in providing the department with an understanding of people’s perspectives, reasoning and breadth of viewpoints. However, because there is no “defined population” from which these responses originate, from a statistical perspective there is no way to know how the respondents compare to a larger population (for example, how the 1,700+ respondents compare to the population of the ten-county region or the state as a whole) and therefore no way that the results can be generalized with an associated error margin to a larger population.

On the east side of the region, Lake Michigan is at the center of water-related outdoor recreation. On the west side of the region, the Kettle Moraine State Forest, with its large land base, is the primary location for many other outdoor activities to many in this region. Yet, between these two resources, the region is home to many other state and locally managed areas where people can recreate outdoors. The department received comments, perspectives and ideas on the following topics.

Participation in outdoor recreation

Respondents to the public input form participate in many outdoor recreation activities. Popular activities that were selected by respondents are seen in the table at right. We can compare these results with the recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) survey. The **bolded** activities in the table were the most popular activities that the SCORP survey indicated residents in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region participate in. The activities that respondents to the ROA input form participate in are similar to the results of the random sample of Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region residents generated by the SCORP survey.

Popular recreation activities in which respondents to the ROA input form participate

Bicycling – surfaced trails

Bicycling – mountain biking, single track

Camping – tent

Canoeing/kayaking

Cross-country skiing/ snowshoeing

Fishing – from a boat, canoe or kayak

Fishing – from shore

Hiking, walking, running on trails

Swimming

Wildlife/bird watching

Properties that people visit

A small percentage of the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region is in public ownership, totaling over 95,000 acres. With a few exceptions, much of public lands are generally less than 2000-acre blocks. The most popular places to go among people who provided input are the Ice Age Trail, Kettle Moraine State Forest-Northern Unit, Southern Unit, Lapham Peak Unit and Pike Lake Unit, as well as the Glacial Drumlin and Hank Aaron State Trails. County park systems, including those in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties, were noted as popular places to recreate.

Factors important in determining favorite places to visit

Of the people providing input, the majority (76%) selected (1) the quality of trails as top of the four most important factors in determining their favorite property to visit. This is expected, given that many respondents noted their participation in a variety of trail activities. In decreasing order, the next three most important factors are: (2) the desire to be in a quiet place, (3) the quality of the habitat, and (4) good maps, signs or information about the property.

Additional outdoor recreation opportunities needed

About 80% of respondents believe that more recreational opportunities are needed in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. Of the additional opportunities desired by respondents, the top three choices selected were for non-motorized trail-related uses. Primitive camping and more access to water also were identified as needs. The opportunity that was most frequently selected as needed in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region was more trails for hiking, walking or running, which was selected by more than 40% of respondents.

Top 10 most frequently identified recreation opportunities needed in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region, based on public input gathered during the ROA process

| Activity | # of responses |
|---|----------------|
| More hiking/walking/running trails | 769 |
| More paved bicycling trails | 586 |
| More natural surface (dirt) bicycling trails | 412 |
| More rustic/quiet campgrounds (pit toilets, no electricity or generators) | 390 |
| More public shore access to lakes & streams | 368 |
| More local parks and playgrounds | 279 |
| More trails for motorized recreation (ATVs, UTVs, off-road motorcycles, etc.) | 225 |
| More horseback trails | 211 |
| More wildlife watching decks or platforms | 188 |
| More developed campgrounds (electric hook-ups, flush toilets, showers) | 183 |

The recent SCORP survey of statewide residents found a correlation between the activities that people pursue and their perspectives on what additional opportunities are needed in their home county. For many activities, participants generally believed there was a need for more opportunities. The public input received as part of the ROA showed a similar pattern in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. For example, 85% of those who identified themselves as ATV/UTV riders thought there was a need for more motorized recreation trails. Also, 55% of those who ride single track mountain bikes believe there is a need for more mountain biking trails in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. Lastly, about half of people who identified themselves as hikers/walkers/runners on trails thought that there was need for hiking/walking/running trails.

Interestingly, over 55% of those identifying themselves as canoe/kayakers desired more hiking, walking, running trails while only a third desired more public shore access to lakes and streams. A similar pattern occurs with respondents who cross-country ski, over half identifying a need for more hiking, walking, running trails. This occurrence may be simply due to respondents participating in multiple activities or that they identify that having more hiking, walking, running trails as an advantage to their primary activity.

Department-managed roads and motorized access

About 170 miles of roads exist on department properties in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. These roads are used primarily for management purposes, including primitive seasonal logging roads, natural resource management or other property service activities. Over one-third (66 miles) of these roads are part of the property transportation network and open to the public at least part of the year to drive “street-legal vehicles” (this includes cars, pick-up trucks, SUVs, motorcycles and other licensed vehicles). By state law, these roads are also open to horses, horse-drawn vehicles and bicycles.

The department sought public feedback on potentially opening none, some, or all department roads that are currently open to “street-legal” vehicles in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region to motorized recreation vehicles.² About half of the people that provided responses believed that all DNR roads should remain closed to motorized recreational vehicles. Of the 39% that supported allowing motorized recreational vehicles on DNR roads, almost half thought that this access should be on a subset of roads that connect larger regional motorized recreation networks. In addition, about a quarter of these respondents supporting opening roads thought opening roads should occur to provide access during the fall hunting season (Sept 1 to Dec 31). Among those identifying themselves as big game hunters, 28% thought all roads should remain closed. Over a third of big game hunters who favored opening some roads to motorized use preferred that it connect to a regional motorized trail network while less than a third preferred motorized use during the fall hunting seasons.

INPUT GATHERED AS PART OF THE WISCONSIN SCORP.

In 2016 as part of the development of the SCORP, the department asked a random sample of Wisconsin residents to identify additional outdoor recreation opportunities needed in their home county. The most frequently identified needs statewide were:

- hiking/walking/running trails
- bicycling trails
- public shore access to lakes, rivers and streams
- public shooting ranges
- public campsites
- local parks and playgrounds

Respondents living in the eight counties in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region identified the following activities, among others, at a higher rate than the state average:

- local parks and playgrounds

² For purposes of the ROA, “recreational vehicles” includes off highway vehicles, ATVs, UTVs and off highway motorcycles.

Lower Lake Michigan Coastal residents identified the following activities, among others, less frequently than the state average:

- hunting opportunities

FUTURE RECREATION NEEDS IN THE LOWER LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL REGION

The Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region has an abundance of existing opportunities for most types of outdoor recreation. These opportunities are related to the diversity of public land ownership in the region. Even with the existing supply of opportunities available in the region, the public identified several future recreational needs. The public also expressed strong support to leverage existing opportunities to provide better and more recreational experiences for residents and visitors.

The department used the following sources to identify which recreation opportunities are most needed in the region:

- Public input on recreation needs submitted during the comment period (November 15, 2017 to January 2, 2018).
- Data on recreation participation and needs gathered in a 2016 survey as part of the development of the 2017-2022 SCORP.
- Data gathered in previous SCORP planning efforts.

From this information, department staff grouped the relative needs for recreation activities as high, medium or low. The groupings are as follows:

| Future recreation needs in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region – High | Future recreation needs in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region – Medium | Future recreation needs in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region – Low |
|---|--|---|
| Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding Bicycling - mountain biking/off-road biking Bird or wildlife watching Camping - primitive Canoeing or kayaking Cross country skiing Fishing - lake fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak Fishing - lake fishing from shore or a pier Gather mushrooms, berries, etc. Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking Motorboating (waterski/tubing, personal watercraft) Nature photography Picnicking Snowshoeing Swimming in lakes and rivers | ATV/UTV riding Bicycling - fat tire/snow biking Camping – developed Dog walking Fishing - ice fishing Fishing – river fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak Fishing - stream or river fishing from shore or wading Four-wheel vehicle driving Geocaching Horseback riding Hunting – big game Off-highway motorcycle riding Participating in nature-based education programs Sailing, windsurfing, rowing, stand-up paddling Target shooting - archery Visiting a beach, beach walking | Dog sledding/skijoring Dog training Dog trialing Horse cart driving Hunting - migratory birds Hunting - small game Hunting - turkey Rock climbing Scuba diving/snorkeling Snowmobiling Target shooting – firearms Trapping Whitewater rafting |

OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET FUTURE RECREATION NEEDS IN THE LOWER LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL REGION ON DEPARTMENT-MANAGED LANDS

On behalf of Wisconsin residents, the department owns and manages properties in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region to meet a variety of ecological and recreation goals. These properties are largely influenced by the ecological landscape and presence of Lake Michigan. There are a variety of types of properties that provide a range of settings and experiences.

Applying the regional needs listed above, the department evaluated the properties it manages in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region to identify places where it could potentially incorporate some activities or enhance existing opportunities to meet these needs. The identification of department-managed lands that appear to be “good fits” to provide different activities will be used to help focus the department’s work developing and updating property master plans. A description of opportunities to meet recreation needs in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region (on department-managed lands) follows.

NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL RECREATION

Non-motorized trail recreation has been and continues to be a primary outdoor activity throughout the year in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. From hiking and biking the state trails in the summer to cross country skiing at the state forests in the winter, the region’s residents and visitors take advantage of the numerous opportunities that currently exist.

An extensive network of state trails traverse the region, allowing riders miles and miles to explore – from Lake Michigan to Madison. Hiking, walking, and running on trails in the region also remain very popular activities. Many opportunities currently exist on department properties throughout the region. Additional trails near population centers are likely to be most frequently used.

Participation in mountain biking has also grown recently in the region and demand exists for trails suitable for a variety of skill levels. As opposed to recreational bicycling, where there are benefits to creating multiple connecting linkages, meeting the growing need for mountain biking and off-road biking opportunities can be created or expanded at multiple, stand-alone sites throughout the region. Mountain biking trails are constructed, narrow trails less than two feet wide.

Cross-country skiing is popular in this area of the state, however the reduced amount of snow the region receives and shorter winter season makes it challenging to have quality trails. Outside of the snow-making capabilities at Kettle Moraine State Forest-Lapham Peak Unit, skiers depend on adequate snowfall to provide skiing opportunities. Even though the season may be shorter than northern parts of the state, there are many opportunities on department properties to expand groomed trail networks or create new ones.

Cooperatively Managed Trails

It should be noted that the department owns several state trails in the region. However, some of these trails are cooperatively managed by local governments, usually counties. In these partnerships, the department typically holds the land ownership while the partners develop, maintain and operate the trail. Also, the managing partner conducts planning processes to determine which recreational uses will be allowed on the property. Since use decisions are planned by the trail partners, cooperatively managed trails will not be listed below as potential “good fits” in this analysis. However, the information collected will be provided to the partners for their use in future planning efforts. For the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region, cooperatively managed trails include:

- Eisenbahn State Trail

The following table lists current and potential future opportunities for non-motorized trail activities:

| Recreation Activity | Activity currently exists at the property; there are opportunities to expand this use | Activity currently exists at the property; there are only limited opportunities to expand this use | Activity currently does not exist at the property; there are opportunities to add this use | Activity currently does not exist at the property; there are only limited opportunities to add this use |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Bicycling - bicycle touring/ road riding | Harrington Beach and Kohler-Andrae State Parks Kettle Moraine State Forest-Lapham Peak Unit Havenwoods State Forest Hank Aaron State Trail | Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit and Southern Unit Paradise Valley Wildlife Area | Kettle Moraine State Forest – Loew Lake Unit, Mukwonago River Unit and Pike Lake Unit | Allenton Marsh, Jackson Marsh and Theresa Wildlife Areas Onion River Stream Bank Protection Area |
| Bicycling - mountain biking/off-road biking | Onion River Stream Bank Protection Area | Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit, Southern Unit, and Lapham Unit Paradise Valley Wildlife Area | Kettle Moraine State Forest – Mukwonago River Unit | Kettle Moraine State Forest – Loew Lake Unit Allenton Marsh, Jackson Marsh and Theresa Wildlife Areas |
| Cross-country skiing | Havenwoods State Forest and Kettle Moraine State Forest – Lapham Peak Unit Hank Aaron State Trail Honey Creek and Onion River Stream Bank Protection Areas La Budde Creek Fishery Area | Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern and Southern Units Cedarburg Bog and Lulu Lake State Natural Areas | Kettle Moraine State Forest – Loew Lake and Mukwonago River Units State Ice Age Trail Areas Allenton Marsh, Big Muskego Lake, Bloomfield, Clover Valley, Honey Creek, Jackson Marsh, Lyons, New Munster, Paradise Valley, Theresa, Turtle Valley and Vernon Wildlife Areas | Tichigan and Turtle Creek Wildlife Areas |
| Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking | All department properties are open to hiking, although most fishery, wildlife and natural areas do not have designated trails. Designated trails are found on state park, trail, forest, and flowage properties. Nearly all department properties have opportunities to add at least some designated hiking/ running/backpacking trails. | | | |
| Snowshoeing | All department properties are open to snowshoeing, regardless if department properties have designated trails or not. Snowshoe use on groomed cross-country ski trails is usually not allowed. | | | |

WATER RELATED RECREATION

In addition to trail-based activities, there is considerable demand for water related recreation in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region, including motorboating, fishing, swimming, and canoeing or kayaking.

Given Lake Michigan and the number of streams in the region, fishing and boating have long been among the more popular outdoor activities here. Although there are many existing boat launches (both sites that accommodate trailers with motorboats as well as carry-in access for canoes and kayaks) there are several opportunities for additional access sites on underserved waterways on department properties to meet the demand. Depending on the waterway, foot access for fishing may be sufficient. In other cases, primitive canoe access or developed boat landings may be what is needed for additional access.

The following table lists current and potential future opportunities for water related recreation.

| Recreation Activity | |
|--|--|
| Canoeing or kayaking | <p>Although not every property with open water has formal boat access sites (or access sites on all waterbodies) many of the lakes, rivers, and larger streams on department-managed lands have some opportunities to carry in a canoe or kayak. The following properties may have the potential to add more or better develop walk-in trails to access waterbodies with canoes or kayaks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honey Creek Wildlife Area Jackson Marsh Wildlife Area Kettle Moraine State Forest – Mukwonago River Unit New Munster Wildlife Area Onion River Stream Bank Protection Area Theresa Wildlife Area |
| Fishing - lake fishing from a boat, canoe, or kayak | <p>The department currently maintains improved boat launches throughout the region. Many department properties connecting to these waterbodies either already have boat accesses or have no feasible way to create more. There are a few department properties that would be able to help address this recreation activity. Other public land management agencies may be able to provide additional access as well. The following properties may have potential to add more improved boat access sites (ramps for trailered boats):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honey Creek Wildlife Area Kettle Moraine State Forest – Mukwonago River Unit Onion River Stream Bank Protection Area |
| Fishing – lake fishing from a shore or pier | <p>All department lands with streams or rivers are open to shore fishing and as such there are not opportunities to expand this opportunity at existing properties. There may be opportunities to expand shore fishing opportunities through the acquisition of key parcels or to create disabled accessible fishing areas on the following properties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honey Creek Wildlife Area Kettle Moraine State Forest – Mukwonago River Unit Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit Onion River Stream Bank Protection Area Tichigan Wildlife Area |
| Swimming in lakes and rivers | <p>All department properties adjacent to public waters allow swimming. Many state parks and forests have beaches, changing rooms and other amenities to accommodate swimming.</p> |
| Motorboating (waterski/tubing, personal watercraft) | <p>The department currently maintains improved boat launches throughout the region. In some cases, these opportunities are on small lakes, many of which have slow-no wake protections in effect. Any new opportunities for higher speed boating would be dependent on these resource protection measures.</p> |

OTHER FORMS OF RECREATION

There appears to be demand for many other types of outdoor recreation in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region, including camping, picnicking, nature photography, and gathering berries and mushrooms. The best opportunities appear to be for expanding or creating day-use facilities at department properties.

The following table lists current and potential future opportunities for other forms of recreation.

| Recreation Activity | Activity currently exists at the property; there are opportunities to expand this use | Activity currently exists at the property; there are only limited opportunities to expand this use | Activity currently does not exist at the property; there are opportunities to add this use | Activity currently does not exist at the property; there are only limited opportunities to add this use |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Camping – primitive | Harrington Beach State Park Kettle Moraine State Forest-Northern Unit and Southern Unit | Big Foot Beach State Park Kettle Moraine State Forest-Pike Lake Unit and Lapham Peak Unit | State Ice Age Trail Areas (some) Kettle Moraine State Forest-Mukwonago River Unit Theresa Wildlife Area | Kohler-Andrae State Park Richard Bong State Recreation Area Allenton Marsh, Jackson Marsh and Paradise Valley Wildlife Areas |
| Picnicking | Harrington Beach, Kohler-Andrae and Lakeshore State Parks Richard Bong State Recreation Area Hank Aaron State Trail Kettle Moraine State Forest-Pike Lake Unit Silver Lake Marsh Wind Lake Fishery Area | Big Foot Beach State Park Havenwoods State Forest, Kettle Moraine State Forest-Northern Unit, Southern Unit and Lapham Peak Unit Allenton Marsh Wildlife Area | State Ice Age Trail Areas (some) Kettle Moraine State Forest-Mukwonago River Unit Forestry Education and Awareness Center Camp Lake, Crystal Lake, Eagle Lake, Onion River, Hooker Lake Marsh, La Budde Creek, Mullet River Schuet Creek Fishery Areas Cedar Creek Honey Creek and Jackson Marsh Stream Bank Protection Areas | Kettle Moraine State Forest-Loew Lake Unit Jackson Marsh, Paradise Valley, Theresa, Turtle Valley and Vernon Wildlife Area |
| Bird and wildlife watching | All department properties are open to bird and wildlife watching. Trails are sometimes desired but not necessary. In some cases, properties may be able to add viewing platforms that would provide better vantage points from which to view wildlife. Nearly all department properties have opportunities to add at least some designated hiking trails or viewing platforms that would aide this activity. | | | |
| Gather mushrooms, berries, etc. | All department properties are open to gathering edibles. Depending on what the fruit or mushroom sought, some properties may be preferred over others. Generally, no infrastructure is needed or desired for harvesting. Some products found on state properties are not allowed to be harvested without permission. | | | |
| Nature Photography | All department properties are open to nature photography. Depending upon if the target is a landscape view or a rare butterfly perched on a blade of grass, some properties may be preferred over others. Viewing platforms may assist some photography and provide better vantage points from which to capture images of wildlife. | | | |

SUMMARY OF THE LOWER LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL REGION ROA

With an assortment of public conservation lands, the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region is a frequently visited recreation destination, largely due to its proximity to urban centers such as Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

Although the region is rich in current opportunities, several needs were expressed by residents. Topping the list of needs are: hiking, walking, and running trails, bicycling trails, rustic campgrounds, public shore access and local parks and playgrounds.

The department believes there are opportunities to meet some of the desired recreational experiences on some of the properties it manages in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. In general, the department believes the following property groups are well-suited to provide the identified needs in the region:

STATE PARKS

- Hiking/walking/running loop trails of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to urban areas would likely be most popular.
- Paved bicycle trails that expand the existing network linking to the existing urban trail network and to campgrounds.
- Primitive camping to connect visitors to the myriad of lakes and rivers in the region.
- Picnicking areas for visitors to gather, recharge and enjoy a day in the park.

STATE TRAILS

- Hiking/walking/running loop trails of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to urban areas would likely be most popular.
- Paved bicycle trails that expand the existing network linking to the existing urban trail network and to campgrounds.
- Cross-country skiing to allow visitors to continue their trail adventures through the winter.

STATE FORESTS

- Paved bicycle trails that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- Mountain biking trails that expand existing opportunities and create new destinations. These trails could be single-track, constructed trails of varying difficulties (potentially including skills areas).
- Cross-country skiing to allow visitors to continue their trail adventures through the winter.
- Canoeing and kayaking with improved walk-in trails to access waterbodies.
- Lake fishing opportunities with improved boat access and disabled accessible fishing sites.

STATE WILDLIFE AND FISHERY AREAS

- Hiking/walking/running loop trails of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to cities and villages likely would be most popular.
- Cross-country skiing to allow visitors to continue their trail adventures through the winter.
- Canoeing and kayaking with improved walk-in trails to access waterbodies.
- Lake fishing opportunities with improved boat access and disabled accessible fishing sites.

